Targeted Interviews with Key Local Government Personnel in Five Regions of North Carolina Vulnerable to Sea-level Rise

Nicholas Institute For Environmental Policy Solutions
Summer 2009

Methods

- Three professionals from the Nicholas Institute met with elected officials, citizens, and town resource managers in the five counties judged most vulnerable to sea-level rise within the APNEP region: Beaufort, Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell, and Washington counties.
- Two forums:
  - county commissioners' meetings – 20 min PowerPoint presentation and Q&A; 20–100 people at each.
  - Meetings in town managers' offices; 1–4 people at each.
- Bill Holman set up each meeting.

Findings and Recommendations

For findings and recommendations see main body of this report.

Climate Change: Perceptions, Knowledge, and Needs of Local Decision Makers in Coastal North Carolina

Nicholas School of the Environment (NSOE), ENV 280
Randy Kramer, Professor
Spring 2009

Methods

- The survey was e-mailed to 160 local decision makers in coastal cities and counties in North Carolina.
- Participants were chosen for the survey from coastal counties and cities in North Carolina using a nonrandom, nonprobability sampling method, though attempts were made to gain representation from all coastal counties in North Carolina.
- 59 surveys completed by respondents in 15 counties and 9 cities.
- 18 came from Dare county; 3 from Beaufort county; 1 from Washington county; 0 from Hyde; and 0 from Tyrrell. Of the 22 relevant responses, 81% are from Dare, 13% from Beaufort, and 6% from Washington; of the entire survey, 37% of respondents came from our five counties.

Respondent Demographics

- Working in local government: mean: 11.8 years.
- Working in current position: 0–3 years: 40%; 4–7 years: 30%; mean: 11.8 years.
- Expertise: business: 27%; public policy: 26%; land-use planning: 19%.

Findings

- 73% of surveyed local officials believe climate change is (or probably is) occurring.
- Only 38% claim to know what the potential impacts of climate change are in their communities (+20% undecided). But 60% agree or strongly agree that "climate change will affect my constituents."
- The highest percentage of respondents identified sea-level rise (70%), shore erosion (50%), and increase in storm surge (48%) as expected effects in their communities due to climate change. 38% indentified saltwater intrusion as an expected effect.
- Preparing for climate change: *undertaken*: updating floodplain maps (95%); updating stormwater controls: (44%)/ *not yet undertaken*: educating community members 44%; considering climate change when developing local land-use plans.
- Limiting factors of local government's ability to prepare community: lack of funding (48%); lack of scientific info (44%).
- The highest percentage of respondents also expressed that climate change will affect their communities' tourism (74%), future generations (72%), and economy (72%).